

*President Granted Melancon's Request for Mobile Health Care Clinic to Aid Oil Workers and Residents*

May 31, 2010

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Tomorrow, U.S. Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) will tour the newly opened mobile health care clinic in Venice, La., and meet with the staff and patients. The mobile clinic, which Congressman Melancon [first requested May 19th](#), will treat and screen workers and residents affected by the BP oil leak in the Gulf.

For almost three weeks, Congressman Melancon has been asking the Administration to send temporary clinics to his Congressional District's rural coastal areas to treat the people being exposed to hazardous materials and toxic fumes. In his meeting Friday with President Obama, Congressman Melancon again repeated this request. Later that day, Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Kathleen Sebelius confirmed there would be a [federal commitment of health care services](#) for south Louisiana.

The mobile unit will be located at 339 Coast Guard Road in Venice, La., and will be staffed by a medical team from the HHS National Disaster Medical System. A doctor, two nurses, two emergency medical technician paramedics and a pharmacist will be on site. The clinic will provide medical checkups to people who have come in contact with hazardous materials and also assist in monitoring the health effects of the oil leak on south Louisianians.

**"We are very concerned about the impact of the disaster on public health in the Gulf region," Secretary Sebelius said. "We have been on the ground monitoring the spill's impact on health and have remained in close contact with state and local health authorities as well as members of the congressional delegations from the affected states to understand the health and medical needs in these communities.**

Secretary Sebelius continued, **"I particularly want to thank Representative Melancon and Senator Landrieu for their efforts to bring the mobile unit to Venice. So far, surveillance efforts have detected complaints of throat irritation, eye irritation, nausea, headache, and coughs—these could be caused by a number of conditions, but we're watching them closely. The mobile medical unit and a medical team arriving today in Louisiana can help address health concerns of local residents and responders."**

Congressman Melancon added, **"South Louisianians have been working since Day 1 of this disaster to contain the oil and keep it from entering our marshes. Their efforts are exposing them to hazardous fumes and potentially dangerous dispersants, threatening their health. I am grateful the federal government has heeded my call for a mobile health clinic located where these workers are stationed, so they can be screened and get treatment as soon as they come ashore."**

**"As we keep fighting to plug that leak and clean up the oil, this clinic will help ensure that this environmental disaster doesn't also become a health crisis for south Louisianians."**

Last week, several crewmembers of three vessels involved in oil recovery work reported experiencing nausea, dizziness, headaches and chest pains and were transported to West Jefferson Hospital in Marrero, La. From Breton Sound Marina, where the workers were stationed, to West Jefferson Hospital is an hour drive or more ( [see map](#) ), depending on traffic conditions. One of the workers had to be MEDEVACed by air to the hospital.

President Barack Obama traveled to Grand Isle, La., Friday for a briefing led by U.S. Coast Guard Admiral Thad Allen on the efforts to stop the BP oil leak and prevent the oil from reaching Louisiana's coastal marshes. Congressman Melancon reiterated the need for a temporary clinic to President Obama in their meeting. Congressman Melancon also asked the President for more military boom and to designate a high-ranking federal official with decision-making authority to clear the red tape hindering disaster response.

Congressman Melancon has worked to bring federal attention to the health needs of Louisianians impacted by the oil leak in the Gulf. Last week, Congressman Melancon sent a letter to the Administration requesting assistance in increasing [mental health services](#) in the region to help residents cope with the BP oil disaster in the Gulf. Congressman Melancon has hosted two recent town hall meetings in south Louisiana where he has heard from residents who are starting to display symptoms of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

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